

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 219388

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 219388

TOSEC 141

FOLLOWING LONDON 12980 SENT ACTION STATE INFO ANKARA ATHENS
BONN BRUSSELS COPENHAGEN THE HAGUE LISBON LUXEMBOURG OSLO
OTTAWA ROME REYKJAVIK EC BRUSSELS NATO BRUSSELS OECD PARIS
RPT TO YOU QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 12980

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UK, NATO, XF

SUBJECT: STRESSES IN THE ALLIANCE

BEGIN SUMMARY: AFTER GIVING A BIG PLAY LAST WEEK TO THE
SIGNS OF STRAIN AND DISAGREEMENT WITHIN THE ALLIANCE,
BRITISH MEDIA NOW SEEM MORE WILLING TO CONCENTRATE
ON HOW TO REPAIR ANY DAMAGE THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DONE.
THIS SHIFT IN EMPHASIS IS PROBABLY DUE TO A COMBINATION
OF FACTORS: THE GOVERNMENT'S RESOLUTE DOWNPLAYING OF
THE CONTROVERSY AND ITS REFUSAL TO TAKE UP ANY DEBATING
POINTS; A RESPONSIBLE AWARENESS BY OPINION LEADERS OF THE
DANGERS OF FANNING THE FLAMES OF PUBLIC DISAGREEMENT
WITHIN THE ALLIANCE; A BETTER UNDERSTANDING GENERALLY OF
THE FACTUAL SITUATION THAT CONFRONTED THE US WHEN IT
DECLARED ITS ALERT; AND THE DIVERSION OF PUBLIC ATTENTION
TO THE EFFECT OF OIL SUPPLY REDUCTIONS ON BRITAIN AND
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PAGE 02 STATE 219388

THE COMMUNITY. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER THE VERY FULL PRESS TREATMENT LAST WEEK WHICH WAS FOCUSED ON SIGNS OF STRAIN AND DISAGREEMENT WITHIN THE ALLIANCE, THE WEEKEND PRESS CONCENTRATED MORE ON THE DESIRE TO PATCH THINGS UP. THERE WAS, FOR EXAMPLE, VERY FULL COVERAGE OF THE EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN BRANDT AND THE PRESIDENT, THE US DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION, THE OIL SUPPLY SITUATION, THE VISITS TO WASHINGTON OF FAHMY AND MEIR AND OTHER PROBLEMS TO BE DEALT WITH IN ANY ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE A NEGOTIATED MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT.

2. AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, HMG HAS TAKEN THE PUBLIC POSITION THAT THE ABSENCE OF PRIOR CONSULTATION ABOUT THE US ALERT LAST WEEK VIOLATED NO AGREEMENTS AND CAUSED IT NO ANXIETY. THE GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO JUSTIFY ITS OWN ARMS EMBARGO POLICY AS BOTH FAIR AND NECESSARY TO PROTECT VITAL BRITISH INTERESTS. IT HAS COOLLY DEFLECTED SUGGESTIONS THAT ANY AMERICAN IRRITATION AT THE BEHAVIOR OF ITS NATO PARTNERS MAY HAVE BEEN AIMED AT THE UK.

3. THIS PUBLIC POSITION HAS NOT SO FAR COME UNDER VERY HEAVY ATTACK, ALTHOUGH OPPOSITION LEADER WILSON HAS CONTINUED TO CRITICIZE THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS. THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN POSITION HAS DOUBTLESS HELPED DAMP DOWN TENDENCIES TO PLAY UP THE NEWSWORTHY ASPECTS OF ALLIANCE DIFFERENCES, BUT THERE IS ALSO CONCERN AMONG OPINION LEADERS NOT TO GENERATE MORE CONFLICT THAN MAY ALREADY EXIST. MANY POLITICIANS AND COMMENTATORS ARE IN ANY EVENT WELL AWARE OF THE LIMITED WAYS IN WHICH BRITISH INFLUENCE CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR TO AFFECT THE OUTCOME IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

4. BUT SOME PUBLICATIONS HAVE TAKEN THE GOVERNMENT SERIOUSLY TO TASK. IN A NOVEMBER 3 LEADING ARTICLE, THE "ECONOMIST" BITINGLY CRITICIZES THE BRITISH AND OTHER EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS FOR BEHAVING LIKE OSTRICHES IN THE PRESENT CRISIS. ANALYZING THE FAILURE OF EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THE AMERICAN DECISION TO RESUPPLY ISRAEL AND, SUBSEQUENTLY, TO DETER A UNILATERAL SOVIET INTERVENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE "ECONOMIST" CONCLUDES: "THE FOURTH ARAB-ISRAELI WAR BECAME MORE THAN A MIDDLE EASTERN ISSUE WHEN ITS OUTCOME SEEMED TO DEPEND ON WHICH SIDE'S PROTECTOR WOULD MAKE SURE IT HAD THE MEANS TO STAY IN THE FIELD. FROM THE MOMENT THE SUPERPOWERS BEGAN THEIR RIVAL AIRLIFTS, IT BECAME A QUESTION OF THE COMPARATIVE DEPENDABILITY OF

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PAGE 03 STATE 219388

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RUSSIA AND AMERICA. AND THAT MATTERS VERY MUCH TO EUROPE. THE WEST EUROPEANS CANNOT HOPE TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION, AND THE EAST EUROPEANS CANNOT HOPE FOR ANY ALLEVIATION FROM THE WEIGHT OF SOVIET DOMINANCE, UNLESS THE UNITED STATES IS PREPARED TO GO ON PROVIDING THE COUNTERWEIGHT EUROPE NEEDS AGAINST SOVIET POWER. AND YET THE MAJORITY OF WEST EUROPEANS COULD NOT SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THAT AND WHAT WAS HAPPENING ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN. THEY WERE UNWILLING TO LIFT A FINGER TO MAKE THAT SE COUNTERWEIGHT AVAIL-ABLE TO ISRAEL. THEY WLD NOT HELP THE UNITED STATES TO DO FOR SOMEONE ELSE WHAT THEY WANT IT TO DO FOR THEM IT IS EUROPE'S ABILITY TO SEE WHERE ITS OWN INTEREST LIES, AS MUCHAS ANYTHING ELSE, THAT ILED LAST WEEK'

5. COMMENT: IT IS FORTUNATE THAT THE PUBLICITY GIVEN TO CONTROVERSY WITHIN THE ALLIANCE STEMMING FROM THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS APPEARS TO BE TAPERING OFF, BUT REAL DIFFERENCES REMAIN, OF COURSE, BETWEEN BRITAIN AND THE US, AND WITHIN THE EC, OVER POLICIES TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST. PRIME MINISTER HEATH HAS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED HIS DETERMINATION NOT TO SEE BRITISH OIL SUPPLIES ENDANGERED, AND THE EC FACES SOME HARD DECISIONS ON OIL SHARING. ALL OF THIS ASSURES CONTINUED PUBLIC ATTENTION ONND DEBATE OVER BRITAIN'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY IN THE COURSE OF WHICH US POLICY AS WELL WILL INEVITABLY REMAIN UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY.

ANNENBERG UNQUOTE RUSH

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